

Testimony for March 3, 5pm for the Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-committee

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Secondary Education Sub-committee: My name is Ellen Kleckner and I am the Coordinator of Youth Services of the New London Youth Service Bureau, referred to as New London Youth Affairs.

Thank you for recognizing the importance of prevention and positive youth development in Connecticut communities. I am very concerned about the impact that the proposed deep budget cuts for Youth Service Bureaus will have on New London youth and families.

New London Youth Affairs has been serving youth and families for 25 years. This year to date, the New London Youth Service Bureau provided programs and services for 400 regular participants, ages 8 months to 21 years of age, and their families. New London Youth Affairs employed over 150 teen employees during the most recently completed year, partnered with more than 140 organizations, and distributed 6,789 books to children.

As a city with dire socio-economic needs, the outcomes New London Youth Affairs targets are especially critical. These include school readiness, preschool placement, high school graduation, employability, higher education preparation, juvenile justice diversions, parent leadership capacity building, and substance abuse prevention. For example, last year 87% of age eligible New London Youth Affairs Family Center participants were placed in a toddler/preschool program, 93% of New London Juvenile Review Board clients completed their diversions from the juvenile justice system, and 100% of New London Youth Affairs Teens in Action members completed the high school community service graduation requirement.

The Department of Education grants fund 5% of the New London Youth Affairs budget, with 10% funded by the municipality. State Department of Education Youth Service Bureau grants thereby allows New London's Youth Service Bureau to **leverage funds covering 95% of Youth Affairs' budget**, an enormous "bang for the buck," totaling an annual New London Youth Service Bureau budget last year of over \$650,000 .

Accordingly, I urgently request your support to:

1. Restore the proposed funding cut from the Department of Education Youth Service Bureau Cost Sharing Grant.
2. Restore funding to the eliminated Department of Education Enhancement grant line item.
3. Maintain Youth Service Bureaus within the Department of Education; not within the Department of Children and Families management.

Thank you for your dedication to Connecticut's youth and families.